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ARUNACHALA!
THE SPIRITUAL AXIS OF THE WORLD

Reading the following extract from A Sadhu's Reminiscence*, by Sadhu Arunachala (Major A. W. Chadwick), it would appear that Bhagavan was quite certain about a corresponding holy hill exactly opposite the globe to Arunachala. Major Chadwick writes:*

"He used to say that Arunachala was the top of the spiritual axis of the earth. 'There must,' he said, 'be another mountain corresponding to Arunachala at exactly the opposite side of the globe, the corresponding pole of the axis.' So certain was he of this that one evening he made me fetch an atlas and see if this was not correct. I found, according to the atlas, the exact opposite point came in the sea about a hundred miles off the coast of Peru. He seemed doubtful about this. I pointed out that there might be some island at this spot or a mountain under the sea. It was not until some years after Bhagavan's passing that a visiting Englishman had a tale of a spot, supposed to be a great secret-power centre, in the Andes somewhere in this latitude. Later I found that though a centre had certainly been started, it had failed. Since then I have been told of another person who is practising meditation in solitude in the region of the Andes in Ecuador. So it does appear as though there were some strange attraction about that part of the globe. The earth is not an exact sphere and maps are not so accurate as all that, so we are unable to pin it down to any definite point. It is quite possible that more is going on in that part of the world than we know and this would fit in well with what Bhagavan said. However, I could never discuss the matter with Bhagavan, as it was not until many years after his passing that I had any indication that anything of this sort was happening in those parts. I had many years ago travelled extensively in that country, but had never seen anything which would lead me to think that there might be important spiritual centres there."

Following the thread of Major Chadwick's research, ***Dr. Ravi Iyer*** *of Virginia writes about his investigation into* ***Machu Picchu****, an ancient, sacred mountain in Peru.*

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi always insisted that the Holy Hill Arunachala was the spiritual axis of the world, even in a physical sense, similar to the geographical North Pole, with a South Pole axis. So strongly did he maintain the view that another holy hill existed on the opposite side of the globe to Arunachala – which was itself remarkable since he normally did not take very rigid positions except on matters concerning the Self and the Heart – that he once made a devotee pull out a world atlas and look for a similar mountain opposite to Arunachala. The only mention we have of this endeavor was that the search indicated a spot on the continental shelf beneath the Pacific Ocean immediately off the coast of Peru. No further effort seems to have been spent after this, though it appears that Bhagavan may not have supported the conclusion of that research, since he seemed convinced that a land-based mountain existed at the other end of this "spiritual axis".

The Latitude/longitude Coordinates of Arunachala (Tiruvannamalai) are: 12n13, 79e04

Recently I came across an article about a place in the high Andean mountains of Peru that is reputed to be

a site of great spiritual force, called Machu Picchu. Machu Picchu was discovered by Yale archeologist Hiram Bingham in 1911, and is the site of an ancient Inca temple city. This city appears to have evaded discovery by the marauding armies of the Spanish Conquistadors, yet it represents one of the immense mysteries of the Inca civilization. It appears the Machu Picchu Mountain itself was known as sacred to the Incas from a time before their own civilization, since the Inca's speak of the mountain as the "Ancient One," who preceded the civilization of their ancestors.

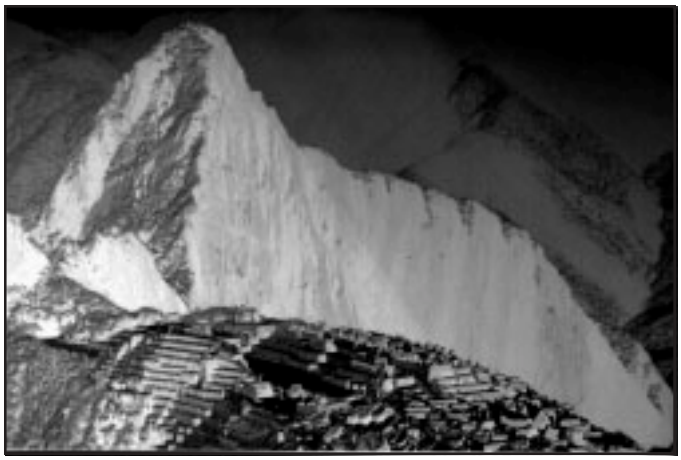
There are several striking parallels between the Machu Picchu site and the Shakti culture. The Inca's worshipped Machu Picchu as the manifestation of the Divine Mother Goddess of the Universe. They referred to Her as "Paachamama," a name that bears a striking similarity to the name "Pachaiamman" used for Parvathi in South Indian shrines. [In the early 1900s, the Maharshi spent many months at the Pachaiamman Temple at the foot of the Hill, outside the town of Tiruvannamalai.] The architecture of the temple city was astrologically and astronomically determined. Various points of the city serve as a kind of giant sextant or observatory from where specific constellations and celestial objects can be plotted and observed. A closer look at the topology of the city reveals a striking resemblance to the Sri Chakra, the Meru architectural topology that characterizes Indian Shakti shrines.

On the psychic plane, multiple individuals with siddhic/occult capacities have separately asserted on visiting Machu Picchu that the city is a place where the feminine aspect of the Universe is especially palpable.

Lastly, the Latitude/longitude coordinates of Machu Picchu are: 13s07, 72w34

While the geographical coordinates are not exactly opposite of those of Arunachala, it would be unreasonable to expect it would be exact since the earth is not a precise sphere.

I share this with the general community of Ramana bhaktas as an item of spiritual and historical interest. While ultimately there is nothing but the Self, as long as the manifested world is our framework of reference then we will be confronted by the dual pairs of balancing opposites. There can be no Siva without Shakti, and vice versa.



References & Notes:

The URL to the astrodienst web site for latitude-longitude determinations is: http://www.astro.com/cgi/aq.cgi?lang=e

The global coordinates for Tiruvannamalai and Machu Picchu are as follows:

Tiruvannamalai: 12n13, 79e04

Machu Picchu: 13s07, 72w34

If you do a precise reversal of Tiruvannamalai's coordinates you will indeed fall off the coast of Peru. You can confirm this by going to the following website and entering the precise reverse coordinate of Tiruvannamalai: http://www.fourmilab.ch/earthview/vlatlon.html (The site shows a satellite view. Make sure you are viewing earth from a 10 km height).

Regarding information on Machu Picchu, check out: "Machu Picchu"
http://www.sacredsites.com/2nd56/21422.html

"Machu Picchu Crown Jewel In The Clouds" http://www.he.net/~mine/inca/ . This site has the Meru like (Sri Chakra architecture of the city)

"Machu Picchu"
http://www.ifip.com/Machupichu1.htm

RECALL: Sage of Arunachala DVD

We regret to announce that a major defect in the new *Sage of Arunachala* DVD has been discovered. There is a real danger of disc layers splitting, causing damage to your equipment. The manufacturer has requested a total recall of all the DVD discs, which will be replaced. We ask you NOT to play the DVD. Please return it to us, in its case, for replacement. We are very sorry for this inconvenience.

Guru Kripa

The following talk was given by ***Srimati Mangalam Kalyanam*** *at the December 21st Sri Ramana Jayanti program in New York City. Srimati Mangalam conducts Ramana Satsangs in the Atlanta, Georgia area.*

गुरु ब्रह्म गुरु र्विष्ण गुरु र्देवो महेश्वरः।
गुरु साक्षात्पर ब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरुवे नमः॥

Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Deva Maheshvara, Guru is the Supreme Brahman, salutations to the Guru.

I would like to thank all of you for giving me this opportunity to share a few thoughts. A renowned Tamil saint, Manikkavasagar once said:

அவன் அருளாலே அவன் தாள் வணங்கி

which means: *"It is by His Grace ONLY that I am able to pray to Him."*

It is our Guru's Grace that has enabled me to be with all of you and partake in this celebration. My topic of choice is "Guru Kripa" or "Grace of Guru". Over the years this word "Grace" has become a very special word to me. Let me start by quoting Thirumular, a great Tamil saint and scholar of old:

தெளிவு குருவின் திருமேனி காண்டல்
தெளிவு குருவின் திரு நாமம் செப்பல்
தெளிவு குருவின் திரு வார்த்தை கேட்டல்
தெளிவு குருவின் திரு வுரு சிந்தித்தல்

Wisdom is seeing Guru's Holy Form
Wisdom is chanting Guru's Holy Name
Wisdom is listening to Guru's Holy Words
Wisdom is meditating on Guru's Holy Presence

These lines express the importance of Guru and also clearly explain the ways to attain *Jnana,* or Self-knowledge. Guru's Kripa is omniscient, ever-present. What blinds us from this fact is our own ignorance through ego or *'ahankara'*. Ego sustains the "I am the body idea." Happiness, sorrow, fame, infamy, wealth, and poverty are all attributes of the body that functions according to the previous and present karmas. At times of ecstasy, the ego in us gloats in its glory, and at times of despair it ridicules the body.

With a little effort, and of course Guru's Grace, we all may have moments of clarity and intellectually accept the "I am not the body idea." But to sustain these moments in our day to day life, the abounding Grace of the Guru is important.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharishi always stressed that salvation is for the soul and not for the body. At each point of our wavering life, if we question who is feeling, who is suffering, etc., we can steep our soul in non-duality and lead a life like water on a lotus leaf, or like the very best non-stick pan.

Next comes the question, "Who gets the Guru's Kripa?" It's an ironical question, having said already that the Guru's Grace is always present. Let me illustrate from Bhagavan's life to answer this question. Bhagavan treated all beings equally. He could (would?) not see the physical forms. The cows, the birds, the barber, the priest, the scholar, the child, the woman – everyone had His Grace. The form we have now taken was determined by our *prarabdha karma*. Bhagavan's Grace-abounding presence is in the formless, limitless Self, which is inside all of us. Understanding this is fairly easy, but to hold onto it is very difficult. Again, only the Guru's Grace can help us stay focused.

How do we realize the Guru's Grace? By unconditional surrender and unwavering faith. Unwavering faith is beautifully explained in the grand epic *Ramayana*. *Adhyatma Ramayana* is a fresh perspective on a philosophic approach to the *Ramayana*. In this story, Rama is portrayed as *jivatma* (individual). *Kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), etc. are the demons that kidnap Sita, who personifies *shanti* (peace). The demons hide her in the middle of the ocean of *maya*.

Rama pines for Sita, which parallels the struggles of the *jivatma* when separated from the *Paramatma* (Supreme Self). Just like a *Sadguru* who points to the source of peace, Hanuman pointed out Sita to Rama. Rama, the *jivatma,* sustained the Lord's Grace through his unwavering faith. He builds a bridge of penance –through *sravanam* and *mananam,* hearing and meditating on the Truth – across the ocean of *maya*. He fights and roots out all the demons (*kama, krodha, moha, madha*) through *Atma-Vichara* (Self-

enquiry) and unites with Sita (peace).

Such is the power of unwavering faith. Faith begets *bhakti*, *bhakti* begets surrender and unconditional surrender effaces the ego. Effacement of the ego is union with the Supreme Self. What we were, what we are, and what we become is all Guru's Kripa. Acceptance of the Divine Will in all matters leads to peace, and then there will be no questions or complaints.

A fine poet named Sadhu Om has beautifully put it in these words:

எனக்கென்ன வேண்டும் என்ன வேண்டாம்
என்பதை எல்லாம்
என்னைவிட நன்கறிந்தோன் எம் பெருமானே
நான் நினைத்த திவதென்றல் ஞாயமாகுமா
ஸ்ரீ ரமணன் இச்சை இன்றி எதும் நல்லதாகுமா
தான் நினைத்த திவன், கேட்போன் தாஸனுகுமா
சர்வ மும் அறிந்தோன் செய்கை தப்பு மாகுமா

"What I need and what I don't need is better judged by my Guru. Is it fair to ask for something specific once you have surrendered? Having surrendered to the Guru, he will do what is best for you."

I would like to share an experience in my own life when I felt the Guru's Grace-abounding presence. This took place in 1979 when I was living with my husband and three children in Asansol, a city near Calcutta. My husband was working for Indian Oxygen. Bhagavan's centenary was coming up and Ramanasramam was gearing up for this big event and also the Kumbhabhishekam. The whole year was going to be filled with lots of events and celebrations. I longed to be there, but what could we do? We were living far away and the children were in school. Well, just when we reconciled to this sad reality my husband got an unexpected phone call from the managing director. He informed my husband that there was a labor dispute going on in the Madras factory and that we were going to be transferred to Madras immediately. We were amazed by His Grace!

While in Madras we enjoyed all the celebrations. It so happened that the labor dispute took a full year to resolve, and as if we were posted close to the Ahsrama only for the Centenary events, we were transferred back to Calcutta the very next year!

To conclude, I would like to quote from a well known piece titled "Footprints." For those who are unfamiliar with this passage, it is about a conversation taking place between man and God, looking back on the journey of life. Metaphorically, the man notices two sets of footprints throughout his life, one his, the other God's. However, at times of great despair there were only one set of footprints and he asks God why He deserted him? The reply that God gives aptly describes Guru-Kripa.

"My dear child" says God, " I would never desert you. During your times of trial and suffering when you see only one set of footprints, it was then, that I carried you."

An Invitation

You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in observing the 53rd Mahanirvana Anniversary of

Sri Ramana Maharshi

Saturday 3 May 2003

11:00 a.m.

at the

COMMUNITY CENTER

HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

(GANESHA TEMPLE)

143-09 HOLLY AVENUE, FLUSHING, QUEENS,

NEW YORK 11355

The program will include recitations, bhajans, puja, followed by prasad (lunch)

For more information call:

(718) 575-3215

on the web at: www.arunachala.org/Events

THE MAHARSHI is a free bimonthly newsletter edited by Dennis Hartel and Dr. Anil Sharma and distributed in North America by Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. The newsletter is also delivered by e-mail as a PDF. Send request to "ashrama@arunachala.org". This issue and all back issues are available at "http//www.arunachala.org". Books, videos and audio CDs on Sri Ramana Maharshi can also be found on this Website.

FORTY VERSES IN PRAISE OF SRI RAMANA

By Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni
Translated by Dr. Anil K. Sharma
(Continued from Nov/Dec 2002 issue)

kecid-yogavidäà puraùsara iti praj ïäni-
buddhyäparesädhuù kaççidité tare gurudhiyä
ke'pya ì ghri-padmaà tava |
sevante ramaëäbhidhäna manuja-kñemäya jäta
kñitau dviträs tväà girija ì ka-péöha-nilayaà
jänanti devaà guham | |15| |

kecid - some, *yogavidäà* - of the knowers of yoga, *puraù* - foremost, *sara* - going, *iti* - indicates quotations (""), *praj ïäni* - gyaani, *buddhya* - with thought, idea, *apare* - others, *sädhuù* - sadhu, *kaççid* - some, *iti* - idicates quotations, *itare* - another, *gurudhiyä* - with idea of Guru, *ke'py* - some also, *a ì ghripadma* - lotus feet, *tava* - your, *sevante* - they worship, *ramaëäbhidhäna* - named Ramana, *manuja* - born of Manu, man, *kñemäya* - for peace, *jäta* - born, *kñitau* - on earth, *dviträ s* - two or three, *tväà* - you, *girija ì ka* - Mother's lap, *péöha* - seat, *nilayaà* - resting place, *jänanti* - they know, *devaà* - Lord, *guham* - Skanda

Some (know you) as "the foremost of the knowers of yoga," others as "gyaani," some others as "sadhu," while some, thinking of you as "guru," worship your lotus feet. Ramana, born on earth for the peace of men, (only) two or three know you as Lord Skanda, resting on the lap of Girija, the Divine Mother.

omkärärtham-upädiço bhagavate väëémanohäriëe
tätäyäpy-upadeñöum-udyatamabhüt ki ï cit-
tvadéyaà mukham |
jyeñöhasyädya sahodarasya gurutäà präptosi dhé-
gauravät subrahmaëya kaniñöhatämapi gataù
sarvädhikas-tvaà gunaiù | |16| |

omkärärtham - the meaning of OM, *upädiço* - explained, *bhagavate* - to Lord, *väëé-mano-häriëe* - the stealer of Vani's (Saraswati's) mind, Brahma, *tätäya* - to father (Shiva), *apyupadeñöum* - even to explain, *udyatam* - undertaken, commenced, *abhüt* - had, *ki ï cit* - something, *tvadéyaà* - your, *mukham* - mouth, *jyeñöhasya* - of the eldest, *adya* - now, *sahodarasya* - of brother, *gurutäà* - state of being guru, *präptosi* - you obtained, *dhé* - intellect, wisdom, *gauravät* - from the weight Subrahmaṇya, O Subramanya!, *kaniñöhatäm* - state of youngest, *api* - though, *gataù* - gone, *sarvädhikas* - greater than all, *tvaà* - you, *gunaiù* - by merits.

The meaning of OM was explained (by you) to Lord Brahma. (Opening) your mouth, you had undertaken to explain something to even your father (Shiva). O Subramanya, even though you are the youngest, by your merits you have become greater than all! By the weight of your wisdom, you have obtained the state of guru to your eldest brother (Ganapati.)

yat-pürvam çruti-päradarçidhiñaëo
dvaipäyano'dhyäruhat paççäd bodha-kaläavidhüta-
timiraù ça ì käpahaç-ça ì karaù |
tat-sampratya-khiläné-talajuñäm äcärya-
si ì häsanaà deva tväm prativékñate naratano
gérväëa-senäpate | |17| |

yat - which, *pürvam* - before, *çruti* - Vedas, *pära* - fullest extent, *darçi* - seeing, *dhiñaëo* - wise, intellegent, *dvaipäyano* - Vyasa, *adhyäruhat* - mounted, *paççäd* - after, *bodha* - knowledge, *kalä* - a single portion (one-sixteenth), *vidhüta* - dispelled, *timiraù* - darkness, *ça ì kä* - fear, *apahaç* - removing, *ça ì karaù* - Sankara, *tat* - that, *samprati* - now, *akhilä* - whole, *avané* - world, *tala* - surface, *juñäm* - suffering in, *äcärya* - teacher, *si ì häsanaà* - lion's throne (seat of honor), deva O Lord!, *tväm* - you, *prativékñate* - (it) awaits, *naratano* - embodied as man, *gérväëa* - gods, *senäpate* - O army chief!

That Lion's seat of honor which was previously mounted by the wise Vyasa, who saw the fullest extent of the Vedas, was afterwards occupied by fear-destroying Sankara, who with a single portion of his knowledge dispelled the darkness (of ignorance). Now that throne of Acharya, (to save) those who are suffering in the world awaits thee, O Lord embodied as man, O Army Chief of the Gods (Skanda)!

In Remembrance

Roy Colonna, a long-standing devotee of Bhagavan, quietly left his body in the affectionate company of his wife on January 20, 2003.

Upon a chance sight in 1970 of Bhagavan's photo in the the store-front window of the Manhattan, 6th Street Arunachala Ashrama, Roy was immediately drawn to Guru Ramana and his teachings.

He attended the nightly chanting and meditation until his move to Gilbertville, NY in the 1973. All devotees can never forget his resounding chanting of "Arunachala Siva" and his robust enthusiasm, which continued up to his very last day.

Roy was an accomplished artist, Tai Chi and Karate teacher, loving father, friend and husband to his remarkable wife Elizabeth. Devotees of Arunachala Ashrama attended his funeral on January 25th and chanted the "Arunachala Siva" and "Bhavani Ashtakam," both of which were cherished by Roy. He will always be remembered and loved by all who knew him.

Babubai Parekh first read the Maharshi's *Who Am I?* booklet while yet a college student in Gujarat. He immediately recognized the purity and directness of the teachings, and how the Maharshi embodied them.

Babubai worked as an engineer and college professor before immigrating to the USA in 1971. In New Jersey, he took an engineering job and immediately began sponsoring relatives, family after family, until the total number that settled in the USA by his efforts reached 150! He founded a Sangam so the children of all his friends and family could be taught traditional Indian music, Sanskrit and literature. His knowledge of these subjects was prolific.

In the later 1970s when he first heard of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Arunachala Ashrama in NYC, Babubai collected his family into the car and drove straight to the Ashrama. Since then he and his family have been an integral part of Bhagavan's family.

In recent years, Mr. Parekh's health had been failing. He told his family members that he would leave this world alone, with none of them near him. On January 25th, this actually came to pass, as he locked himself into a room – something he never does – then breathed his last. Apparently he desired to prepare himself for the transition without distractions.

Babubai Parekh was much loved by his family and friends and will be missed by all.

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs and meditation have been going on in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these and meet followers of Sri Ramana Maharshi in your area, please contact the individuals below for more information.

Boston Area — David & Anna Klegon (617-928-1487 /dklegon@rcn.com)
Detroit, Ann Arbor Area — Prashanth & Shobana (734-327-0109 / prashvis@hotmail.com)
Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-423-7324) / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)
Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adiseshan (703-502-4892 / adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)
Miami, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-755-4758 / Arunahill@aol.com)
San Francisco Area — Swaminathan & Sangeeta (510-324-1160 / Nachiketas@hotmail.com)
Toronto, Canada — Krishen & Padma Sastri (905-849-6005 / psastri@hotmail.com)
Ottawa, Canada — Anantha Padmanabhan (713-733-8250 / padmanabhan_ananth@hotmail.com)

123rd Jayanti of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

A Synopsis

Over the decades Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings have slowly seeped into the awareness of seekers in North America. Though these teachings appear to be well known, valued for their directness, purity and simplicity, the continued presence and power of the messenger, the Maharshi, has yet to be discovered or understood to any great extent.

The Maharshi never told us to go out and spread his teachings, but rather to go inward and realize their truth. Following this ideal, Arunachala Ashrama has, nevertheless, seen a steady growth of interest in Sri Ramana, not only as the teacher, but as the Guru. The recent, large wave of Indian nationals, especially from South India, into the North American society has brought many serious devotees to our shores. This is resulting in even greater interest in the expression of devotion to the Master.

The Jayanti

The devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi enthusiastically gathered to remember and celebrate the life and teachings of our Master at residences and halls in different parts of Canada and the USA.

In Ottawa on December 20th, at the home of Anantha Padmanabhan, monthly Sri Ramana Satsangs were inaugurated with devotion and simplicity. Anantha Padmanabhan writes: "Early in the day by 8 A.M., we started with Veda Parayana ("Rudram," "Chamakam," "Purusha Suktham" chanting) and "Siva Upaasana Manthiram." By around 10A.M. all of us, including the children, started chanting "Arunachala Stuti Panchakam," "Aksharamanamalai" and "Upadesa Saram." This was followed by a very melodious rendering by Dr. Krishnan of a slokam in praise of Bhagawan in his state of total bliss, a meditative prayer taught to Krishnan by his beloved mother (a staunch Ramana devotee and disciple of Janaki Matha). This was followed by Bhajans…The Ottawa Ramana Satsang thus started on Bhagavan's Jayanthi Day...By His grace, we hope to have monthly satsangs to study Bhagavan's teachings and commentaries. We invite all devotees who are interested to share these moments in Ramana Satsang."

On December 21, Arunachala Ashrama celebrated the Jayanti in New York City. Srimati Mangalam Kalyanam, sister of President Sri V. S. Ramanan, spoke with deep devotion and insight on "Guru Kripa" (see page 3 for text).

December 29th, at the home of Swaminathan and Sangeetha, in Union City, California, a few dozen devotees gathered and experienced the all-pervasive presence of Sri Bhagavan. Sri Rajagopalan, who had the great fortune of spending a day in the Master's presence in 1947 at the age of twenty-one, described in minute detail and serenity his experience. Though on a trip to Gingee, a nearby town, the Gingee trip has receded into oblivion, while every detail of the Master's actions on that day remains fresh in Sri Rajagopalan's memory. Signing the visitor's register upon arrival, Sri Rajagopalan proceeded straight to the Old Hall after depositing some of his belongings in the Guest House for Men near the kitchen. Bhagavan was just returning from his morning walk on Arunachala. Sri Rajagopalan observed the routine of the Ashrama, the chanting of the Vedas, the daily mail being brought to Bhagavan's presence, attendants massaging Bhagavan's legs and Bhagavan stepping out of the hall to caress a cow that came up to the entrance. At lunch, as the newcomer of the day, Sri Rajagopalan was given the privilege of sitting right next to Bhagavan. He observed how squirrels and sparrows came close to Bhagavan's leaf to receive food from his hands, while they would run away when others tried to feed them. Sri Rajagopalan remembers the day immersed in the peace of Bhagavan's presence and said that if he had gone there in his present frame of mind, he would have never left.

At the Siva Vishnu Temple in Maryland, Dr. Narayanaswami, a trustee of the temple, requested the Washington D.C. area devotees to organize a Jayanti program on January 8. The celebration began with Vedic chanting by the temple priest and a large number of devotees gathered in a hall arranged for the function. Bhagavan's works were sung, a part of Bhagavan's life in video was shown and a talk on his birth was given. Prasad (a full meal) was distributed to the devotees at this and at all of the Jayanti programs.